The Method of *Resolutio* and the Structure of the Five Ways

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Various attempts have been made at structuring Thomas Aquinas's Five Ways. Lawrence Dewan, for example, holds that the first four ways can be organized according to the notion of act[1]. Leo Elders, on the other hand, links each of the ways to a different type of causality[2]. Joseph Owens attempted to structure the Five Ways in relation to the framework of Aquinas's metaphysics of existence[3]. In my own study of the Five Ways, I've been captivated by the symmetry between the Five Ways and the stages of the metaphysical method of *resolutio*. In this article I present the outlines of that symmetry.

The first indications of *resolutio* (analysis) as philosophical method are found in Aristotle, who outlines the process of scientific

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[1] See L. DEWAN, "The Number and Order of St Thomas's Five Ways", *The Downside Review* 92 (1974), 14: "The first way starts from being imperfectly or imperfect actuality, i.e., motion considered as the actuality of the potential or movable. The second way starts from operation, i.e. motion considered in comparison to the motive or operative power. The third way, viewing things as revealed by generation and corruption, considers substantial being or actuality. The fourth way, then, considers things according as one is better than another, truer or more intelligible than another, nobler than (i.e. priori in perfection to) another. Thus the first four ways seem to be constructed on the basis of the Aristotelian doctrine of being, according as 'being' signifies that which is distinguished according to actuality and potentiality".

[2] See L. ELDERS, *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1990, 85-86. According to Elders, the First Way involves material causality, the Second Way efficient causality, the Third Way a quasi-formal and quasi-efficient causality, the Fourth Way formal causality, the Fifth Way final causality. He writes: 'The Five Ways are different proofs because of their different starting-points which involve different causal processes. Inasmuch, however, as the genera of causality occur together, the proofs form an organic whole and are complementary" (p. 88).

[3] See J. OWENS, "Aquinas and the Five Ways", *The Monist* 58 (1974), 16-35.

knowledge in his *Physics* as moving from the things that are more manifest to us to the things that are more knowable by nature[4]. In fact, we generally start from what is confused and synthetic and, by means of analysis, come to distinguish certain elements and principles in the *subiectum* we are studying. Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's text highlights the need to come to a distinct knowledge of what contained in confused things in an indistinct manner. This distinct knowledge of principles and elements, Aquinas affirms, is achieved by means of resolution (*per resolutionem*)[5].

Aquinas broadens the Aristotelian vision of the method of analysis to intrinsic principles to embrace that of reduction to extrinsic causes. In his *Commentary on Boethius's De Trinitate*, question 6, article 1, he holds that one can arrive by means of resolution to knowledge of the ultimate intrinsic and extrinsic causes of *ens in quantum est ens*. The resolution that terminates in knowledge of the extrinsic causes is called "*secundum rem*", while the resolution that terminates in knowledge of intrinsic causes or principles is called "*secundum rationem*"[6]. Unlike the former, the latter does not move from one substance to another, but rather stays within the thing and through analysis brings to light its constitutive principles.

The phase "according to reason" does not mean that we obtain only distinctions of reason or that we are dealing merely with a method of logical analysis[7]. Rather, "according to reason" refers to the discursive nature of the human mind that composes and separates. In the resolutions of *ens mobile* in physics and *ens in quantum est ens* in metaphysics, *resolutio* "according to reason" obtains judgments of separation such as "the subject is not its accidents", and judgments of composition such as "the subject is to its accidents as potency is to its act", "prime matter participates in substantial form" and "accidental *esse* is *inesse*". These judgments (as mental separations or compositions) regard principles that are really distinct in a finite or created being[8].

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[4] See ARISTOTLE, *Physics* I, 1, 184 a 10-15.

[5] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Phys*., lect. 1, n. 7: "Sed tunc est scientia complete in actu, quando pervenitur per resolutionem ad distinctam cognitionem principiorum et elementorum".

[6] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 1.

[7] See J. AERTSEN, "Method and Metaphysics: The *via resolutionis* in Thomas Aquinas", *The New Scholasticism* 63 (1989), 412-414.

[8] See J. VILLAGRASA, "La *resolutio* come metodo della metafisica secondo Cornelio Fabro", *Alpha Omega* 4 (2001), 63.

1. *Resolutio secundum rationem*

In recent years, some Thomists have argued that the metaphysical stages of *resolutio secundum rationem* are outlined by Aquinas in texts like *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 44, a. 2 and *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5[9]. The following comparative chart shows the correspondence between such texts and how there are at least three main stages.

I, q. 44, a. 2	***De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5**	***De substantiis separatis*, c. 9**	***In VIII Phys.*, lect. 2**
Accidental motion: accidental causes	Sensible things: accidents and material substance	1.1 Distinction substance - accidents: alteration 1.2 Resolution of substance into corporeal principles	*Alteratio*
Matter / form: substantial change	Matter / form: form is not considered universally	Resolution of sensible substance into matter and form	*Generatio et corruptio*
Ens qua ens: search for *causa essendi*	*Ens universale*: search for the universal cause of being	Common resolution by the intellect into that which is and its being	*Principium totius esse*

Metaphysics, then, ought to move from the composition of subject and accident to that of prime matter and substantial form and from these compositions to the real composition of essence and *actus essendi*. Jan Aertsen has worked extensively on this point and developed the themes of structure, causality and becoming in each of the three stages of *resolutio secundum rationem*:

> With regard to the *structure of being*, the analysis yields successively the distinctions between substance and accident, matter and form, and essence and being (*esse*). […] With regard to (efficient) *causality*, there is a progression from a particular towards a universal cause, God. […] With regard to '*becoming*', what is dis-

[9] See J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1988, 196-201; *Ibid.*, "La scoperta dell'ente in quanto ente", in S. BROCK (ed.), *Tommaso d'Aquino e l'oggetto della metafisica*, Armando Editore 2004, 35-48; J. VILLAGRASA, *Metafisica II. La comunanza dell'essere*, APRA, Rome 2009, 417-426, R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1995, 134-159.

cerned successively is accidental change (*alteratio*), substantial change (*generatio*), and the *emanatio* of being[10].

Textual evidence for this structure as being proper to the method of *resolutio* is found in Aquinas's *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9, where *resolutio* is explicitly referred to in the various stages of the progression of metaphysical thought. The second stage, for example, is said to resolve sensible substances into their essential parts of matter and form[11]. The third stage, which is properly metaphysical, involves a "certain common resolution" of that which participates in *esse* into that which is (*id quod est*) and its *esse*[12].

Throughout his works, Cornelio Fabro mentioned three stages in metaphysical resolution: he referred to this process as a resolution from accidental acts and forms to substantial form and from both of these to the act of being[13]. The passage from one stage to another is made possible by means of an analogy of proportionality, which applies the notions of act and potency to the three compositions. This analogy can be represented as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Subject}}{\text{Accidents}} : \frac{\text{Potency}}{\text{Act}} : \frac{\text{Matter}}{\text{Form}} : \frac{\text{Essence}}{\textit{Esse}}$$

In summary, the three stages of *resolutio secundum rationem* are:

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[10] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 201. Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *In VIII Phys*., lect. 2, 975.

[11] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9: "Posteriores vero philosophi ulterius processerunt, resolventes sensibiles substantias in partes essentiae, quae sunt materia et forma: et sic fieri rerum naturalium in quadam transmutatione posuerunt, secundum quod materia alternatim diversis formis subiicitur".

[12] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9: "Oportet igitur communem quamdam resolutionem in omnibus huiusmodi fieri, secundum quod unumquodque eorum intellectu resolvitur in id quod est, et in suum esse". In *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5, Aquinas's review of these three stages of metaphysical thought is followed by several arguments that demonstrate that there is a universal cause of being. The demonstrations refer to the commonness of being and the gradation of *esse* in finite beings, and, therefore, to the participation of things in *esse* according to various degrees.

[13] See C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 486: "The metaphysical determination of *esse* as *actus essendi* in the sense of act of all acts, is proper to Aquinas and constitutes the transcendental foundation of the metaphysics of participation. This has been discovered by the strictly metaphysical method of resolution or reduction (*per resolutionem* or *per reductionem*), as Aquinas often calls it, of accidental predicamental acts to substantial form and of both accidental and substantial acts to the more profound substantial act which is *esse*".

Stage	Problems	Real distinction	"Becoming"
I	Accidental change and Multiplicity	Subject - accident	*Alteratio*
II	Substantial change and specific individuation	Prime matter – substantial form	*Generatio*
III	Commonness of being and its gradation	Essence – *actus essendi*	*Creatio*

Before considering the method of *resolutio secundum rem* to extrinsic causes, it is helpful to look at each of the three stages of *resolutio secundum rationem* and the possibility of prolonging the third stage in a fourth stage which considers the ordered operation of *ens per participationem*.

1.1. Accidental change

The philosophical consideration of movement and the resolution to the causes of *ens mobile* leads first to the real distinction between a subject and its accidents and the application of the notions of potency and act to this distinction. Analyzed according to the species of causality, the subject of the accidental change is called the "material cause" insofar as it is that which receives the act and endures the change. The accidental form is called the "formal cause" insofar as it is the act that is super-added to the subject[14]. Subject and accident are said to be related to one another as potency to act. Motion is thus seen as an imperfect act of a subject and is defined as "the act of a being in potency insofar as it is in potency"[15]. Accidental change concerns the subject's acquiring of a new accidental determination.

Accidental change or movement is proper to three categories: in an alteration, the subject undergoes a change in the accident of "quality" (marble that is sculpted receives a figure or shape); a change in the

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[14] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In II Phys.*, lect. 10, n. 240; *Ibid.*, *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, ch. 14: "Quia enim omnia accidentia sunt formae quaedam substantiae superadditae, et a principiis substantiae causatae; oportet quod eorum esse sit superadditum supra esse substantiae, et ab ipso dependens".

[15] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In IX Metaph.*, lect. 1, n. 1770: "motus est actus entis in potentia"; *In XI Metaph.*, lect. 9, n. 2294: "motus dicitur esse actus [entis], quod est in potentia inquantum huiusmodi".

accident "quantity" is an increase or decrease (the quantity of marble decreases as it is sculpted); in local motion, the "place" of the subject changes (the statue is moved from the studio to its place in the museum). While motion is most properly said of accidental change in material beings, it can also be predicated of spiritual motions (of intellect and will) and substantial change[16].

Analyzed according to the notion of participation, the composition of subject and accident reveals that the subject participates in its accidents[17]. Once the real distinction between essence and *esse* in finite *ens* is demonstrated in the third stage of *resolutio*, one can return to the composition of subject and accident and clarify the nature of the *esse superadditum* of the accident and how the accident inheres in the subject and depends on the *actus essendi* of the subject. Substantial *esse*, on the other hand, refers to either the being-in-act (*esse in actu*) of the substance, its subsistence, or to the act of being (*esse ut actus*) that actuates the entire substance[18].

Establishing a real distinction between the subject and its accident and privation as a principle of accidental change does not fully resolve the problem of accidental change. This is because the subject, the accidental form, and privation are the necessary principles of accidental change, but they are not the sufficient causes of the change[19]. Sufficient causes include the efficient and final causes: the efficient

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[16] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *De potentia*, q. 6, a. 6 ad 16: "aequivoce motus dicitur de motu Angelorum et de motu corporum"; *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 73, a. 2: "Quamvis autem motus proprie acceptus sit corporum, tamen nomen motus etiam ad spiritualia derivatur dupliciter". This means that while physics seeks the cause of *ens mobile* in the strict sense and comes to the first immobile mover which is immaterial, metaphysics seeks the cause of *ens qua ens* and finds in the first immobile mover the first uncaused cause of every passage from potency to act, whether it be material or spiritual.

[17] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Boethii de Hebdomadibus*, lect. 2.

[18] See A. CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo*. Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", *Espíritu* 61 (2012), 40.

[19] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *De principiis naturae*, ch. 3: "Ex dictis igitur patet tria esse naturae principia scilicet materia, forma et privatio. Sed haec non sunt sufficientia ad generationem. Quod enim est in potentia, non potest se reducere ad actum: sicut cuprum quod est potentia idolum, non facit se idolum, sed indiget operante, qui formam idoli extrahat de potentia in actum. Forma etiam non extraheret se de potentia in actum (et loquor de forma generati, quam diximus esse terminum generationis); forma enim non est nisi in facto esse: quod autem operatur est in fieri, idest dum res fit. Oportet ergo praeter materiam et formam esse aliquod principium quod agat, et hoc dicitur esse efficiens, vel movens, vel agens, vel unde est principium motus".

cause of an accidental change is that which reduces the potency of the subject to the act measured by the accidental form; the final cause is that which moves the efficient cause to reduce the subject from potency to act[20]. Thus, in the subsequent resolution *secundum rem* to extrinsic causes, one of the requirements of an accidental change is that of an *ens in actu* as efficient or agent cause. Through the causal action of the agent, the subject in potency passes into act and receives a new perfection or actuality.

In the accidental movements that we have considered up to now, it is helpful to distinguish between three types of accidents and their causal relationships with their subject. Proper accidents (*passiones*), such as the powers of the soul, are caused from the principles of the species of the subject. Inseparable accidents, such as being male or female, are caused from the principles of the individual subject. Separable accidents are introduced into a subject from without by either violence (like heat into water) or in agreement with the principles of the subject that receives them (like light into air)[21]. What emerges from this distinction is that the problem of accidental change refers principally to the separable accidents. This is because accidental change is a reduction from potency to act, and, in the case of proper accidents and inseparable accidents, there is an "eduction" or "production" involved and not a reduction proper to movement. The efficient cause in these two cases is the subject itself[22]. Therefore, in the reduction of a subject from potency to act, we are dealing with separable accidents.

In summary, by applying the method of *resolutio secundum rationem* to the problem of accidental change, one comes to the real distinction of the intrinsic causes of movement: a subject in potency (material cause) and accidental determinations in act (formal cause). A subsequent *resolutio*, through extrinsic causes, is necessary because

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[20] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *De principiis naturae*, ch. 3: "Omne quod agit, non agit nisi intendendo aliquid, oportet esse aliud quartum, id scilicet quod intenditur ab operante: et hoc dicitur finis".

[21] For the distinction between the three types of accidents, see J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphyiscal Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 266-275.

[22] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent.*, d. 17, a. 2 ad 2: "Tamen sciendum, quod omnibus accidentibus, communiter loquendo, subjectum est causa quodammodo, inquantum scilicet accidentia in esse subjecti sustentantur; non tamen ita quod ex principiis subjecti omnia accidentia educantur".

the reduction to act is only fully founded by coming to an efficient cause, namely an *ens in actu* that is capable of reducing the potency of another substance to act.

1.2. Substantial change and the individuation of the species

The second phase in the resolution of being "is reached when the intellect 'resolves' the substance into its essential principles, 'matter' and 'form'"[23]. Rudi te Velde writes that in the second phase, the substance is no longer viewed as matter alone, but as something which includes a form. Thus, the relation of substance to accidents, analyzed in the first stage of *resolutio*, "is superseded by a new relation which is internal to the substance itself"[24].

John Wippel notes that there are two ways to approach the essential composition of material being: one problem is structural and concerns the individuation of the species; the other is more dynamic and concerns substantial change[25]. Common to both problems is the distinction between prime matter and substantial form. Although the principle of individuation for material substances is "matter marked by quantity", prime matter is seen as a necessary condition for the multiplication of the substantial form as species. In a substantial change, generation and corruption, the act-principle that changes is the substantial form, while the potency-principle that survives or endures the change is prime matter.

There are several similarities and differences between the solutions to the problems of accidental change and substantial change. One similarity regards the application of the notions of act and potency to the two principles. In both cases, the potency-principle is determined by the act-principle. Another similarity regards the notion of participation: in both cases, the potency-principle is said to participate in the act-principle[26]. One difference between accidental change and

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[23] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 199.

[24] R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality*, 141.

[25] See J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 351: "Aquinas appeals to matter-form composition of material entities to resolve two different issues: first, the fact that such substances can undergo substantial change; and second, the fact that many individual material entities may share in specifically the same kind of being".

[26] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Boethii De hebdomadibus*, lect. 2.

substantial change concerns the relationships of causal dependence: in the first case, accidental forms depend on the *esse* of the subject; in the second, the substantial form gives *esse* to prime matter and is the cause of the being of matter[27]. Another notable difference between the two problems is that the agent cause of the substantial change is always twofold: there is both a specific agent cause and a universal agent cause[28]. Whether one considers substantial change or the individuation of the species in this second stage of *resolutio*, there is a need to go beyond the particular cause of the substantial form or particular species, and seek a universal cause of the form or species.

The distinction between the specific nature as cause and the universal nature as cause is usually mentioned when Aquinas refers to the Aristotelian expression: *homo generat hominem et sol* (man and the sun generate man).

[1] *Specific nature as agent cause of the substantial form of the individual*: The specific nature "is specifically the same as the nature of the thing generated, although it is in something other. For man generates man"[29]. This acts as a univocal agent that has a particular effect and causes the form to be in this matter.

[2] *Universal nature as agent cause of the whole species*: The universal cause, for Aristotle, is a universal principle, "which by its movement causes the cycle of coming to be and passing away. The movement towards species, generation, must be reduced to the celestial bodies"[30]. For example, Aquinas holds that the sun acts as an equivocal agent in

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[27] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *De veritate*, q. 28, a. 7: "Materia causa est formae aliquo modo in quantum sustinet formam, et forma est aliquo modo causa materiae in quantum dat materiae esse actu". [Matter is, in some way, a cause of form, insofar as it sustains form, and form is, in some way, a cause of matter, insofar as it gives being-in-act to matter].

[28] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *De substantiis separatis*., ch. 10: "A given nature or form has a twofold cause: one, which is 'per se' and absolutely the cause of such a nature or form; the other, which is the cause that such a nature or form is in such a thing. The necessity of this distinction is apparent to anyone considering the causes of the things which are generated".

[29] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In VII Metaph*., lect. 6, n. 1391: "Et iterum principium, a quo fit generatio, sicut ab agente, est natura dicta secundum speciem, quae scilicet est eiusdem speciei cum natura generati, sed tamen est in alio secundum numerum. Homo enim generat hominem; nec tamen genitum et generans sunt idem numero, sed specie tantum".

[30] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 304-305. See I, q. 115, a. 3 ad 2.

> the sublunary processes of generation and corruption and its causality "extends not to a single species but to everything that comes to be and passes away"[31]. It is a non-univocal or equivocal cause insofar as the effect of the cause "is in the cause not in a synonymous manner but in a higher and more universal manner"[32].

Univocal causes are particular, since they are determined to proper effects of a single species: "Man generates man". The end of generation, as Aertsen points out, is nature, "for the nature of each thing is what belongs to it when the genesis has been completed. The intention of nature is directed to the form or specific nature"[33]. Due to this effecting of something similar and the univocity between end and the efficient principle, the way of nature is seen as a *circulatio*: "there is in generation a circulation which however does not return to what is numerically identical but to what is identical *qua* species: man generates man, not Socrates Socrates"[34]. Through the return to the same, reality is conserved and acquires permanence. Since the cause of the *circulatio* cannot lie in the corruptible itself, "the eternal cycle of generation must be reduced – as is shown in *Phys.* VIII and *Metaph.* XII – to the uniform and continuous movement of the celestial sphere"[35]. In this regard, te Velde writes:

> The generation of an individual substance within the realm of nature cannot be explained sufficiently by another individual of the same species (in the sense of "'man generates a man"), since one individual instance of a nature is but the cause of the particular realization of that nature in another instance (*causa huius naturae in hoc*), not of the nature as such. Therefore the generation of individuals of the same species, or more broadly, the generation within the realm of nature, must be reduced to a universal cause of the nature as such (*causa naturae per se*). It is in view of this insuffi-

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[31] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 306.

[32] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 305.

[33] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 105.

[34] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In II Sent.*, d. 20, q. 2, a. 3: "In generatione est quaedam circulatio, quae tamen non redit in idem numero, sed ad idem specie: homo enim generat hominem, non Socrates Socratem".

[35] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 106.

> ciency of any particular natural cause that Aristotle said that 'man *and the sun* generate a man"[36].

The permanence, in which sublunary beings participate, requires a resolution that goes beyond the particular cause of the individual specific nature or form. As Aertsen writes:

> The cause of the sempiternity cannot lie in the sublunary things themselves, since not one of them endures forever. It must be reduced to an *agens perpetuum* which through its uniform and regular movement effects the perpetuity of natural becoming. That is heaven. The circulation of nature whereby reality acquires permanence is reducible to the circulation of the things, which in themselves are imperishable and which to ancient thought were the most divine of sensible things: the celestial bodies. The first movement is the daily revolution of the sphere of the fixed stars. But this uniform movement alone is not sufficient to explain the cycle of coming to be and passing away. For that, a celestial movement is required that has part in the movement of the first sphere but that nonetheless does not remain completely the same. That is the case of the movement of the sun. Through its annual ecliptical orbit the sun is now closer to the earth and now further from it; that movement is the cause of the periodic coming to be and passing away[37].

The uniform, circular, local movement of the heavens is first because it alone can be continuous and everlasting and returns to its principle. Since the uniformity of movement is indicative of a greater degree of immobility, "the multiform movements of the terrestrial bodies must be reduced (*reducuntur*) to the movement of the celestial body as to their cause"[38]. The celestial body is among natural things the "first cause", while the univocal agent is a "second" and "instrumental" cause of becoming and causes matter to acquire a particular form. The heavens have, on the contrary, a more universal influence than the

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[36] R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality*, 142.
[37] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 267.
[38] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 268.

specific nature of the proximate cause of the generation and are the cause of the sublunary forms as such[39].

These two causes – the univocal, particular, second cause and the equivocal, universal, first cause – are described by Thomas as "particular nature" and "universal nature". The "universal nature" is "an active power in some universal principle of nature, for instance, in some celestial body; or a power of some superior substance, in which sense God is also called by some the nature that natures (*natura naturans*)"[40].

1.3. *Ens per participationem*

The resolutions regarding the distinctions between a subject and its accidents according to the notions of act and potency and between prime matter and substantial form can all be considered as proper to the philosophy of nature, which studies *ens mobile*, and as the preparatory phases of metaphysical resolution. In fact, according to Aquinas, the passage from physics into metaphysics *in via inventionis* is made by means of resolution. As he writes in the Prologue to his *Commentary on the Aristotle's Metaphysics*, "transphysical things are discovered by the process of analysis"[41].

Aertsen states that in the problems proper to physics, the decisive and final step has not yet been taken: "For there remains a subject presupposed that is contracted through the form to a determinate species, just as a substance belonging to a certain species (e.g. 'man') is contracted through an accident (e.g., 'white') to a determinate mode of being"[42]. In the third, metaphysical stage the form will contract *actus essendi*. The first two phases of resolution consider being under a particular aspect, as this being (*hoc ens*) or as such being (*tale ens*) and arrives to particular causes, but not to the universal cause of all[43].

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[39] See J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 308. See also THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 104, a. 1.

[40] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 85, a. 6.

[41] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Metaph*., prol.: "Haec enim transphysica inveniuntur in via resolutionis".

[42] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 199.

[43] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 44, a. 2: "Utrique igitur consideraverunt ens particulari quadam consideratione, vel inquantum est hoc ens, vel inquantum est tale ens. Et sic rebus causas agentes particulares assignaverunt".

Metaphysical reflection needs to rise to a more universal consideration of what is common to all beings and account for the limitation of their being to a particular degree. "This final step represents the transition from the categorical consideration of being as nature to the transcendental consideration of being as being. The categorical division according to the particular modes of being is transcended towards being as something common to all things"[44]. Of the transition from physics to metaphysics, in which the *subiectum* of a particular science is elevated to a higher and more universal type of consideration, Rudi te Velde writes:

> By way of resolution the particular object of physics is resolved into the universal object of metaphysics […]. In this manner the transition of the physical consideration of being as nature (form in matter) to the metaphysical consideration of being as such is enacted by way of a reflection insofar as thought comes to realize that its object of physical consideration is indeed a particular mode of being, not coinciding with begin as such[45].

In brief, *resolutio* is not just seen as the method which brings *ens per participationem* to its intrinsic principles and extrinsic causes, but also as the way (*via*) that leads the philosopher of nature into metaphysics. The stages, then, in our understanding of the fundamental structure of finite *ens* can be articulated as follows[46]:

[1] first, there is the analysis (*resolutio*) that presents the problem of the relationship between *ens* and its *esse* in the transition from physics to metaphysics[47];
[2] secondly, there is the *resolutio secundum rationem* which establishes the fact of the real distinction by means of a *quia* argument;

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[44] R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality*, 143.

[45] R. TE VELDE, *Aquinas on God. The 'Divine Science' of the Summa theologiae*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2006, 55.

[46] See A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica nel tomismo del novecento (seconda parte)", *Alpha Omega* 11 (2008), 237.

[47] J. Aertsen holds that the *subiectum* of metaphysics is discovered, not by means of the demonstration of the existence of immaterial beings, but by means of a continued analysis of material beings. See his article, "La scoperta dell'ente in quanto ente", 46.

[3] thirdly, there is the foundation of the real distinction by means of a *propter quid* demonstration which presupposes the proof of the existence of God. In fact, the *propter quid* demonstration refers to the participation of finite *ens* in likeness of Subsistent Being, through the creation of participated *esse* and its specifying or limiting principle.

Examples of *quia* arguments for the real distinction which do not presuppose the demonstration of the existence of God are the five arguments individuated by Wippel[48]. The fourth argument focuses on the fact that *esse* does not participate in anything, while that-which-is (*ens* as *id quod est*) participates in *esse*. Participated *esse* is limited to the capacity of that which participates in it: "because unreceived *esse* is unlimited, appeal to some distinct receiving and limiting principle in the participant will be required to account for the limited presence of *esse* in that participant"[49]. Wippel's fifth argument also accounts for the limitation of *esse* in finite *ens* by means of a distinct intrinsic limiting principle[50]. Based on these demonstrations, one is led to conclude that *esse* as *actus essendi* is the actuating act of all the other acts and forms in a created *ens*, and the source of the perfection of an *ens*.

Ens that has *esse* to a certain degree, implies a composition between the essence as a limiting principle, and *esse* as perfective principle; now while *esse* by itself only connotes perfection, the *esse* of the *ens* that we experience is restricted to a certain degree: "therefore, finite *esse* refers, *per se*, to an infinite *Esse* that is its separate foundation, both exemplar and efficient and this subsistent Being is God"[51]. *Resolutio secundum rationem* resolves *ens in actu* to *actus essendi*; *resolutio secundum rem* resolves participated *actus essendi* to *Esse per essentiam*: "The first *resolutio* takes the form of the observation of the degrees of ontological nobility, which manifests the more or less intense actuality of *ens*, while the second *resolutio* is made by refer-

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[48] See J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 132-176.

[49] J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 165.

[50] See J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 175.

[51] A. CONTAT, "La quarta via di san Tommaso d'Aquino e le prove di Dio di sant'Anselmo di Aosta secondo le tre configurazioni dell'ente tomistico", in *Sant'Anselmo d'Aosta 'Doctor magnificus'. A 900 anni della morte*, C. PANDOLFI and J. VILLAGRASA (eds)., IF Press, Rome 2011, 165.

ence to the *maxime ens*"[52]. In contrast to the previous two stages of resolution, there is no preexisting substrate in which the change, whether accidental or substantial, is effected:

> In the case of an alteration the final term of the process is a new accidental form whereas the substance which underlies the change is presupposed and remains essentially the same during the transition. A generation, however, results in a new substantial form and presupposes the material substrate which sustains and underlies the transition from the old to the new form (*transmutatio*). Even in a generation not everything is new, but it is clearly a more perfect mode of becoming than a purely accidental change. But in creation, the most perfect mode of becoming, the final term is the whole substance of a thing (*tota substantia rei*). Therefore, everything of the effect is new and included in this universal emanation from the first principle[53].

The *quia* demonstration of the real distinction between essence and *esse* in finite *ens* establishes the fact of the distinction. The foundation of the distinction is obtained only by continuing the *resolutio* to extrinsic causes: first demonstrating (*quia*) that the existence of *ens per participationem* demands the existence of *Esse per essentiam*; and second, demonstrating that since the latter is one and unique, all that is diversified according to diverse participations in *esse*, is caused by this one First Being[54].

In summary, the first stage of *resolutio secundum rationem* distinguishes a subject from its accidents and demands an *ens in actu* as efficient cause of the accidental change. The second stage distinguishes prime matter from substantial form and demands not only a specific nature as efficient cause, but also a universal agent cause of natural becoming. The third stage of *resolutio secundum rationem* distinguishes the essence of finite *ens* from its *esse* and demands an efficient-exemplary cause that produces the perfection of being according to the specifying limit of the substantial essence. The production of

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[52] A. CONTAT, "La quarta via di san Tommaso d'Aquino …", 165.

[53] R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality*, 156-157.

[54] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 44, a. 1: "Necesse est igitur omnia quae diversificantur secundum diversam participationem essendi, ut sint perfectius vel minus perfecte, causari ab uno primo ente, quod perfectissime est".

actus essendi according to the limit of the substantial essence, as determined by the exemplar cause, corresponds to the notion of creation.

1.4. *Ordo ad operationem*

Once the fundamental structure of finite *ens* is established according to the method of *resolutio secundum rationem*, there is the possibility of prolonging the third stage of resolution in a dynamic consideration of *ens*. This means delving into the relationship between the finite *suppositum* (understood as a concrete, subsistent subject in act with its proper accidents and faculties) and its *operari*. What emerges is that the finite *suppositum*, which is constituted in its first perfection through its reception of *actus essendi*, is ordered to achieving its second perfection and ultimate end by means of its operation. *Operari* is not considered, as it was in the first stage, as an imperfect act of a subject in potency, but rather as that to which the finite being is ordered and as the means by which a composite being attains its second perfection[55]. As Aquinas writes in Book Two of the *Summa contra Gentiles*:

> Now, as the being and nature of a thing is considered according to its first perfection, so is operation considered according to its second perfection[56].

In Book Three of the same work, Aquinas writes that: "The end of each thing is its proper operation, since this is its second perfection"[57].

The first three stages of *resolutio*, then, allow us to understand the substantial and accidental perfection of a finite being in reference to its *actus essendi* as actuating act. The fourth stage gives us insight into the "operative perfection" of a finite being and the *ordo* to its operation[58]. *Operari*, then, is considered less along the lines of efficient causality (eventually demanding a cause of reduction from potency to

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[55] See J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 356.

[56] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 46: "Sicut autem esse et natura rei consideratur secundum primam perfectionem, ita operatio secundum perfectionem secundam".

[57] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 25.

[58] For the distinction between substantial, accidental and operative perfection, see *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 6, a. 4.

act in the series of movers) and more along the lines of final causality (eventually demanding a cause that governs the finite being to its end). Without referring to this theme as a fourth stage of *resolutio*, Alain Contat has outlined the content proper to this stage of metaphysical reflection in an article entitled: "*Esse, essentia, ordo*: Towards a Metaphysics of Operative Participation"[59]. As this is one of the few publications on the topic, I will be following the argument of his article very closely.

First, in dealing with the operation of finite *ens*, a distinction between *esse ut actus* and *esse in actu* must be made, since, like subsistence and *esse accidentale*, *operari* is an instance of being-in-act (*esse in actu*). At the most fundamental level, the essence as *potentia essendi* and *esse* as *actus essendi* are shown, at the end of the *resolutio secundum rationem* to intrinsic causes, to be the constituent transcendental principles of *ens*. Once these principles of *ens* are established, the metaphysician returns to the composite substance in act in three consequent levels of consideration: first, the finite, subsisting substance can be considered in relation to its *esse substantiale* in act; second, the substance can be considered in relation to *esse accidentale*; third, it can be considered as a *suppositum*, with its proper accidents and operative powers, in relation to its *operari* and its *ordo ad operationem*. This is guided by an analogy of proportionality: "The substantial essence is to its being in act (*esse substantiale*) as the accidental form to its accidental being (*esse accidentale*), and as the operative power is to its operating (*operari*)"[60].

Every substance, Aquinas teaches, is on account of its operation[61]. The answer to the question why a composite being needs to act or operate in order to achieve its end and is also naturally inclined to its end, is found in the expansiveness of act, which tends to communicate itself[62].

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[59] See A. CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo.* Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", *Espíritu* 61 (2012), 9-71.

[60] A. CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo.* Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", 58.

[61] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 45: "Omnis substantia est propter suam operationem".

[62] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *De Potentia*, q. 2, a. 1: "Natura cuiuslibet actus est, quod seipsum communicet quantum possibile est. Unde unumquodque agens agit secundum quod in actu Est. Agere vero nihil aliud est quam communicare illud per quod agens est actu,

Every *ens*, then, is operative in proportion to the degree of its actuality: its act of being first actuates the essence, the *potentia essendi*, and then develops into the "operative energy" of the substance. In this way, the finite *ens*, actuated by *esse*, becomes *operans*. The emergent act of being transcends the essential content that it actuates and tends to diffuse itself in *ens* beyond the essence-in-act to the measure or degree allowed for by the essence. Hence, for Aquinas, the actuality of *esse* is not exhausted, as it is for Suárez, in making the essence to exist outside its cause. The *ordo ad operationem* reveals both the generosity of the act of being of the created substance, which expands in its proper accidents and operations, and the indigence of the being-in-act of the substance, which requires a further perfection attained by means of its operation[63]. The *esse superadditum* of the accident and of the operation do not add a new *actus essendi* to the *suppositum*, but rather are an ultimate expansion of the *actus essendi* of the substance; consequently they are a new *esse in actu*. Thanks to the distinction made between *esse ut actus* and *esse in actu*, we understand that the substance, and more precisely the substantial form, has at its disposition a power (*virtus*) of actuality – due to its *actus essendi* – that allows it to produce its accidents, while the same substance, if considered according to the reality that belongs to its *esse in actu*, is in receptive potency to those same accidents[64].

The notion of "*virtus essendi*" can help us understand the function of *actus essendi* in relation to the other principles of *ens*[65]. *Virtus*

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secundum quod est possibile". [It is in the nature of every act to communicate itself as far as possible. Wherefore every agent acts forasmuch as it is in act: while to act is nothing else than to communicate as far as possible that whereby the agent is in act.]. See A. CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo.* Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", 29.

[63] See A. CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo.* Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", 30.

[64] See A. CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo.* Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", 41-42.

[65] See A. CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo.* Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", 46. See also, F. O'ROURKE, "*Virtus essendi*: Intensive Being in Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas", *Dionysius* 15 (1991), 71: "The act of being is not an empty, functional or efficient energy which in an instrumental manner simply effects into existence the modes of essence and accident of an individual, but is the wellspring which continually nurtures what-is in all its diverse activity. […] Essence and accidents participate in *esse* and draw from it their constant energy. *Esse* is thus the plenitude both of actuality and form, the *actus actuum* and the *forma formarum.* As primary act and plenary perfection, Being is the treasure store of value, a reservoir of richness and energy. *Esse* is thus at once both intensive and emergent act; it con-

essendi, as the actuating capacity enclosed in *esse* itself, is correlative to *potentia essendi*, to the capacity of being that constitutes the essence and is delimited by the form. In the *ens per participationem*, the diffusion of *actus essendi* is "filtered", so to speak, by the substantial form, such that it constitutes two levels of being-in-act, that of the form or essence, with the proper accidents that flow from this, and, then, that of *operari*, thanks to which the finite *ens* achieves its ultimate perfection. The *virtus essendi* is converted, in the finite substance, into *virtus operandi*, which is proportioned to the ontological density of the essence and destined to bring it to its ultimate end[66]. Recalling the distinction made between the two transcendental principles of *ens,* we see that these both "tend, actively and passively, to the *esse in actu* of the substance, of its properties, of its operations, above all to its most perfect operation. Thus, the real composition instills a teleology in *ens*, which directs it from within to its end"[67].

"Every *ens* is ordered to its end on account of its action"[68]. On the one hand, action perfects *ens* and, on the other, action draws from the *actus essendi* specified by the essence as its ultimate expansion. *Ordo* refers to the intentionality of *ens* by which the *ens* in its first act tends to the second act. The act of being, then, as act of the operative act of an *ens*, is the principle of the end to which the created substance is ordered:

> Therefore, if, in a sense, the *operari* is the end of *esse*, insofar as the act of being tends ultimately, in finite *ens*, to the act of *operari*, it is also true, in another sense, that *esse* is the end of *operari*, since the operation has as its scope the actuation of the constitutive *virtus essendi* of *esse* itself, and, therefore, its self-realization. *Esse* is thus the alpha and omega of *ens*: starting from *esse* as source of being, the dynamism of created *ens*, mediated by

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stitutes within an anterior simplicity and unity all the actuality and perfection of a being and diffuses it throughout its each and every aspect".

[66] See A. CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo.* Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", 48.

[67] A. CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo.* Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", 60.

[68] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 16: "Omne enim ens ordinatur in finem per suam actionem".

> the essence, returns as to its end when it achieves the maximum actuality of which it is capable[69].

The substantial form of the creature measures its *actus essendi* and determines its specific end and the operation which achieves this end. Based on this, Aquinas will make a fundamental distinction between the operation of natural beings and of intelligent beings: natural beings return to God only in likeness of nature; intelligent beings return to God by their operation, by their acts of intellect and will[70]. Natural agents act for an end, not because they act through an intellectual pre-conception of the end, but because in the natural agent "there preexists the similitude of the natural effect, by virtue of which similitude its action is determined to the appointed effect: for fire begets fire, and an olive produces an olive"[71].

Like Book III of his *Summa contra Gentiles*, Aquinas's Fifth Way takes up the problem of how things that do not have the knowledge of the end are directed to that end by another[72]. First, Aquinas establishes that all things tend to God and that things devoid of intelligence tend to God as their end by way of assimilation, while intelligent substances do so by way of knowledge[73]. Once it is proved that God is the end of all, one may argue that by his providence he governs or rules all[74]. This culminates in the proof that in all things that operate, God is the cause of their operating: first, insofar as everything that operates is in some way a cause of being and nothing is a cause of being except insofar as it acts by God's power; second, insofar as God causes the power of all agents, from which operation

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[69] A. CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo.* Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", 62.

[70] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 46: "Oportuit igitur, ad consummatam universi perfectionem, esse aliquas creaturas quae in Deum redirent non solum secundum naturae similitudinem, sed etiam per operationem. Quae quidem non potest esse nisi per actum intellectus et voluntatis: quia nec ipse Deus aliter erga seipsum operationem habet".

[71] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 2: "Sicut autem in intellectu praeconcipiente existit tota similitudo effectus ad quem per actiones intelligentis pervenitur, ita in agente naturali praeexistit similitudo naturalis effectus, ex qua actio ad hunc effectum determinatur: nam ignis generat ignem, et oliva olivam".

[72] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 16 and ch. 24.

[73] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 25.

[74] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 64: "Ex his autem quae praemissa sunt, sufficienter habetur quod Deus est rerum omnium finis. Ex quo haberi potest ulterius quod ipse sua providentia gubernet vel regat universa".

comes; third, insofar as God conserves beings and their active forces in being; fourth, insofar as he applies the power of an agent to its action; fifthly, insofar as secondary causes act by the power of the first; sixth, insofar as every operator is directed through its operation to its ultimate end and it belongs to God to direct things to their end[75].

2. *Resolutio secundum rem* and the structure of the Five Ways

Up to this point we have considered the intrinsic causes and principles of finite beings, both with regard to their first perfection (nature and *esse*) and to their second perfection (attainment of the end through *operari*), and offered some indications about the extrinsic causes of finite beings that are to be pursued along the path of *resolutio secundum rem*. A careful reading of Aquinas's *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 1 reveals at least four aspects proper to this *resolutio*.

First, we see that Aquinas calls it a *quasi resolutio*. The qualification of "*quasi*" seems to refer to the fact that this resolution is not a de-composition of a substance into its intrinsic principles, but rather is a reductive passage from one substance to another according to a series of causal dependence.

Second, this *quasi resolutio* is accomplished through the three extrinsic causes: efficient, exemplar and final. An efficient cause is either that which reduces a potency to act, that which educes a form from matter, or that which produces both the act and that which receives the act. The exemplary cause is the extrinsic form which measures, by imitation and not by information, the act that is produced or reduced. The final cause is the motive that moves the agent cause to act. Two ends can be distinguished: the end of generation (*finis generationis*) or and the end of the effect that is generated (*finis generata*), that whereby the thing has its ultimate perfection. The former is ordered to the latter, which is an operation or some product of operation to which one attains by means of operation[76].

Third, a connection can be made between the method of *resolutio* and demonstration *quia*. As M. Tavuzzi writes: "The one or more ar-

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[75] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 67.

[76] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 49, a. 3: "Natura rei, quae est finis generationis, ulterius etiam ordinatur ad alium finem, qui vel est operatio, vel aliquod operatum, ad quod quis pervenit per operationem".

guments which constitute metaphysical resolution *secundum rem* have thus the logical status of demonstrations *quia*"[77]. Thus, the Fourth Way, for example, is a *resolutio secundum rem* of *ens in quantum est ens* and, like the other four ways is a demonstration *quia*.

Fourth, Aquinas's text states that the the separated substances (in the plural) are the ultimate point of arrival of the *resolutio secundum rem*. This brings up the interesting question about whether angels are included in the *subiectum* of metaphysics or are only the principles or causes of that *subiectum*[78]. God is not included in the *subiectum* of metaphysics and this leads us to interpret *ens commune* as *id quod finite participat esse*.

If we anticipate the arguments of the Five Ways, we see that there is a correspondence between the order of the Five Ways and the main stages of *resolutio secundum rationem*.

[1] First, there is a need for an ultimate efficient cause of accidental change. For, if the *ens in actu* that reduces the subject in potency to act is also mobile, then the resolution must continue until it reaches a first *ens in actu* which is not able to be reduced from potency to act.

[2] Second, there is a need for an ultimate efficient cause of substantial forms. For, if the universal nature that causes the whole of the species gives evidence of depending on another in some way, then the resolution must continue to a first cause which does not depend on another being in any way.

[3] Third, there is a need for an ultimate efficient-exemplary cause of all beings that are composed of substantial essence and participated *actus essendi*. Only that which is *Esse per essentiam* is able to produce and measure that which is *per participationem*.

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[77] M. TAVUZZI, "Aquinas on Resolution in Metaphysics", *The Thomist* 55 (1991), 211.

[78] See G. DOOLAN, "Aquinas on Separate Substances and the Subject Matter of Metaphysics", *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 22 (2011), 347-382. Doolan concludes that: "As separate, or immaterial, the angels are studied in metaphysics only as principles of *ens commune*; as substances, however, they are studied in that science as finite beings included under *ens commune*. […] [A]ngels are instrumental causes of *esse* in terrestrial bodies by preserving those bodies in being" (p. 381).

[4] Finally, there is a need for an ultimate governing cause of the ordered *operari* of the created *suppositum*. The substantial form alone is insufficient in explaining the frequent attainment of the end. Hence, there is a need, on the one hand, for an intellect capable of ordering the nature to its end and, on the other, for a distinction between the way that natural beings, which lack intelligence, are governed and the way that spiritual beings, endowed with intelligence, are governed by God and participate in his governance.

Graphically:

Via	***Resolutio***	***secundum rationem***	***secundum rem***
I	Accidental change *Alteratio*	*subiectum et accidens*	1. Beings that are moved 2. Second movers 3. First unmoved mover
II			1. Beings that are effected 2. Intermediate efficient causes 3. First uncaused efficient cause
III	Substantial change *Generatio*	*materia et forma*	1. Possible *ens* subject to generation and corruption 2. Necessary *ens*: celestial body (equivocal cause) 3. First necessary being as cause of necessary forms
IV	Participated *ens* *Creatio*	*essentia et actus essendi*	1. *Ens per participationem* 2. *Maxime ens* as universal, analogical cause of all other beings
V	Ordered operation *Gubernatio*	*suppositum et operari*	1. The ordered or finalized operation of finite *ens* 2. *Aliquid intelligens* by which all natural things are ordered and moved to their end

A cursory glance at some manuals of Thomistic philosophical theology brings to light two temptations that should be avoided: the first is to structure each of the Five Ways in the same way and argue for the impossibility to go to infinity in the series of causes as a premise in each way; the second is to privilege one of the Ways to the exclusion of the others. Instead of falling prey to these temptations, the different problems dwelt with by the Five Ways require different ar-

gumentative structures; and, what is more, the Five Ways work together, build upon one another and provide the foundation for the solution of different problems dealt with later on in the *Prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae* (creation, divine motion in creatures, divine governance).

The problem of accidental change, as we have seen, is not solved in the same way as that of substantial change. The latter requires a distinction that the former does not, namely the distinction between the particular-univocal agent cause and the more universal, non-univocal agent cause. The first three ways all refer to a finite series of movers or causes, the Fourth Way and the Fifth Way do not refer to a series, but rather conclude directly to the ultimate cause. As well, the point of departure of Fifth Way is less universal than that of the other four ways (beings that are moved, beings that are caused, beings subject to generation and corruption, beings by participation), since it is limited to non-intelligent beings.

By establishing the connection of the Five Ways with *resolutio*, we will be able to go beyond their formulations in the *Summa theologiae* and arrive to the metaphysical principles upon which the Five Ways are founded. Reduced to the level of metaphysical principles, we are even able to correct the formulation of the Ways, their terminology, and their cosmological underpinnings.

2.1. First Way: ultimate foundation of accidental change

The First Way, *ex parte motus*, provides two textual evidences that we are dealing with accidental change. The two examples provided by Aquinas refer to the local motion of a staff by a hand, and the qualitative alteration of heating wood.

The First Way begins by explaining that "being moved" means "being reduced from potency to act"[79]. Since it is impossible for something to move itself and be moved at the same time and under the same aspect, one concludes that what is moved is moved by another[80].

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[79] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 2, a. 3: "Movere enim nihil aliud est quam educere aliquid de potentia in actum".

[80] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 2, a. 3: "Impossibile est ergo quod, secundum idem et eodem modo, aliquid sit movens et motum, vel quod moveat seipsum. Omne ergo quod movetur, oportet ab alio moveri".

Or, in terms of act and potency, that which is reduced from potency to act is reduced by another which is in act (*ens in actu*). If a series of movers is involved, then it is argued that second movers only move insofar as they are moved by a first unmoved mover[81]. If there was not a first mover, there would not be any other mover; however since there are movers, there must be a first mover. The impossibility to go to infinity in the series of movers is not a premise or principle that is introduced into and applied to the argument of the First Way from without, but rather a corollary of the demand that there is a *primum movens immobile* that founds the causality of the second movers and the fact of things being moved.

According to the indications of Aquinas's *Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics* for a demonstration[82], the premises and conclusion of the First Way and the other ways can be formulated as follows:

[m] The *ens* that is moved is an *ens* that is reduced from potency to act [*per se primo modo*];
[M] now, that which is reduced from potency to act is ultimately reduced by another *ens* that is not itself reduced from potency to act [*per se quarto modo*];
[c] therefore, the *ens* that is moved is ultimately reduced from potency to act by an another *ens* that is not itself reduced from potency to act [*per se secundo modo*].

The metaphysics here is extraordinary. As David Twetten argues, the reasoning of the First Way grounds motion's need for a cause not in the properties of physical bodies but in the universal notions of act and potency. Twetten continues:

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[81] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 2, a. 3: "Moventia secunda non movent nisi per hoc quod sunt mota a primo movente".

[82] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Expositio Libri Posteriorum* I, lect. 13, n. 3: "Since in a demonstration a *passio* is proved of a subject through a middle term which is the definition, it is necessary that the first proposition, whose predicate is the *passio* and whose subject is the definition which contains the principles of the proper attribute, be *per se* in the fourth mode, and that the second proposition, whose subject is the subject itself and whose predicate is the definition itself, must be in the first mode. But the conclusion, in which the *passio* is predicated of the subject, must be *per se* in the second mode".

> [T]he first way is founded, both in the causal premise and in the refutation of strict self-motion, on the unrestricted terms 'act' and 'potency'. Accordingly, the entire proof extends to 'motion' in the general sense of any 'reduction' from potency into act. It follows that the proof concludes to a mover 'unmoved' in the sense of 'not further reduced or reducible from potency to act'. Otherwise, the mover arrived at will not be first but must have some cause prior to itself. The first way, in other words, concludes to a first 'irreducible reducer'. Such a mover could not even be an immaterial angel, which undergoes successive operations of intellect and will[83].

The manner in which God moves creatures is taken up in *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 105, a. 5. Ultimately, this requires an understanding of the "causality of application", which is best explained by Aquinas in *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 7: "A thing is said to cause another's action by moving it to act: whereby we do not mean that it causes or preserves the active power, but that it applies the power to action […]. God causes the action of every natural thing by moving and applying its power to action"[84]. In the same text, this causality of application is formulated in terms of participation: the instrumental cause participates in some way in the power of the principal cause through being moved thereby: "thus, the axe is the cause of the craftsman's handiwork not by its own form or power, but by the power of the craftsman who moves it so that it participates in his power"[85]. Bernard Lonergan has traced the evolution of Aquinas's thought on application and concludes that: "In the commentary on the *Sentences* and the *De Veritate* God operates the operation of creatures because he is creator and conserver; in later works other grounds are more prominently asserted,

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[83] D. TWETTEN, "Clearing a 'Way' for Aquinas: How the Proof from Motion Concludes to God", *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 70 (1996), 268.

[84] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 7: "Una res esse causa actionis alterius in quantum movet eam ad agendum; in quo non intelligitur collatio aut conservatio virtutis activae, sed applicatio virtutis ad actionem […]. Sequitur de necessitate quod Deus sit causa actionis cuiuslibet rei naturalis ut movens et applicans virtutem ad agendum".

[85] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 7: "Instrumentum enim est causa quodammodo effectus principalis causae, non per formam vel virtutem propriam, sed in quantum participat aliquid de virtute principalis causae per motum eius, sicut dolabra non est causa rei artificiatae per formam vel virtutem propriam, sed per virtutem artificis a quo movetur et eam quoquomodo participat".

namely, application, instrumentality, finality. In parallel fashion earlier works state that the creatures cannot operate without God, while later works state that they cannot operate without the divine motion"[86]. The application of the creative operative power to its operation is explained by A. Contat as requiring "an intervention of the First Cause, which takes away the potentiality of the created agent and 'frees', so to speak, its dynamic power"[87].

We see, then, that the conclusion of the First Way complement those of the Fourth Way and the Fifth Way, since the operation of all created things is caused by God and the operation of all created things is ordered to God as their ultimate end and governed by God as their ultimate end.

2.2. Second Way: *per se* ordered efficient causes

The Second Way, *ex ratione causae efficientibus*, is very similar to the First Way with regard to its argumentative structure. Just as something cannot move itself at the same time and in the same respect, it cannot be the cause of itself at the same time and in the same respect. This is justified by the impossibility that something to be prior to itself[88]. Secondly, just as the series of movers demands a first immobile mover, the series of efficient causes demands a first uncaused efficient cause.

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[86] B. LONERGAN, *Grace and Freedom: Operating Grace in the Thought of St Thomas* Aquinas, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2000, 92-93. See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 109, a. 1: "Videmus autem in corporalibus quod ad motum non solum requiritur ipsa forma quae est principium motus vel actionis; sed etiam requiritur motio primi moventis. Primum autem movens in ordine corporalium est corpus caeleste. Unde quantumcumque ignis habeat perfectum calorem, non alteraret nisi per motionem caelestis corporis. Manifestum est autem quod, sicut omnes motus corporales reducuntur in motum caelestis corporis sicut in primum movens corporale; ita omnes motus tam corporales quam spirituales reducuntur in primum movens simpliciter, quod est Deus. Et ideo quantumcumque natura aliqua corporalis vel spiritualis ponatur perfecta, non potest in suum actum procedere nisi moveatur a Deo".

[87] A. CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo.* Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", 62.

[88] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 2, a. 3: "Invenimus enim in istis sensibilibus esse ordinem causarum efficientium, nec tamen invenitur, nec est possibile, quod aliquid sit causa efficiens sui ipsius; quia sic esset prius seipso, quod est impossibile".

First Way	Second Way
It is impossible that something simultaneously move and be moved (move itself) in the same way.	It is impossible that something simultaneously cause and be caused (cause itself) in the same way.
It is impossible to proceed to infinity in the series of movers, since there would not be a first mover or, consequently, any other mover.	It is impossible to proceed to infinity in the series of causes, since there would not be a first efficient cause, an ultimate effect, or intermediate efficient causes.

While similar to the First Way in its structure, the Second Way has the primary function of broadening the *ratio* of efficient causality beyond that of reducing a potency to act. In fact, in each of the stages of *resolutio secundum rationem*, there is a need for an efficient cause, articulated as follows in each problem or stage:

[1] Accidental change: that which reduces a subject in potency to act;
[2] Substantial change: that which educes a substantial form from matter;
[3] Creation: that which produces an act and that which receives the act;
[4] Governance: that which moves something to its end.

The second function of the Second Way is that of complementing the argument of the First Way insofar as it emphasizes an aspect that is implicit of the causal series of First Way. Namely, the causal series of the First Way must be a *per se* ordered series, such that if the cause is taken away the effect does not remain. This connection is seen clearly in *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 38, where Aquinas summarizes how the impossibility to go to infinity in the series of efficient causes regards only *per se* ordered causes and not *per accidens* ordered causes. The connection of the First Way is seen clearly in the example that he provides, of a hand moving a stick that simultaneously moves a rock, which is similar to that of the First Way, that of a hand that moves a stick[89].

[89] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 38: "Quia causas agentes in infinitum procedere est impossibile, secundum philosophos, in causis simul agentibus: quia

The reference to the distinction between *per se* and *per accidens* series is implicit in the use of the term "*ordo*" and explicit in the argument that if the cause is taken away then the effect is also taken away. The *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae* contains two texts that refer to essential and accidental causal series. In I, q. 7, a. 4, an actually existing infinite multitude is impossible, a potentially infinite multitude is possible. In I, q. 46, a. 2 ad 7, a *per se* series of efficient causes is argued to be impossible; however, a *per accidens* ordered series of efficient causes is not impossible. When a *per accidens* efficient cause is taken away, the effect remains.

In summary, the Second Way has a twofold task within the Five Ways. First, it broadens the horizon of efficient causality as reduction, invoked in the First Way, to include efficient causality as education of form from matter (first part of the Third Way), as production of form (second part of the Third Way), as production of being (Fourth Way), and as governor of natural beings to their end (Fifth Way). Second, it clarifies that the causal series of the First Way is a *per se* ordered series.

2.3. Third Way: ultimate foundation of substantial change

The point of departure of the Third Way, *ex possibili et necessario*, is the fact that there are things that are generated and corrupted. Unlike an alteration or local movement, which are reductions from potency to act in the categories of quality and place, generation and corruption are instances of substantial change and are "movements" according to the substance. The thrust of the first part of the Third Way argues that not everything can be subject to generation and corruption, and that there must be some necessary *ens*.

John Grieco's analysis of Aquinas's Third Way[90] complements the findings of Aertsen's *Nature and Creature*, and examines at length

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oporteret effectum dependere ex actionibus infinitis simul existentibus. Et huiusmodi sunt causae per se infinitae: quia earum infinitas ad causatum requiritur. In causis autem non simul agentibus, hoc non est impossibile, secundum eos qui ponunt generationem perpetuam. Haec autem infinitas accidit causis: accidit enim patri Socratis quod sit alterius filius vel non filius. Non autem accidit baculo, inquantum movet lapidem, quod sit motus a manu: movet enim inquantum est motus".

[90] J. GRIECO, *An Analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas's Third Way* (Dissertation), Catholic University of America, Washington DC 2006.

the meanings of possible and necessary in Aquinas and the proper interpretation of the two "temporal propositions" of the Third Way.

Grieco's first conclusion is that "things should be called possible or necessary with reference to proximate causes as opposed to remote ones, we should analyze the 'possibles to be and not be' as having this possibility owing to their possession of matter open to contrariety of form and not merely to God's active power to create and annihilate them nor merely to 'absolute possibility'"[91]. Secondly, dependent necessary beings are not hypothetical realities for Aquinas, but rather correspond to the heavenly spheres, to beings that are incapable of undergoing generation and corruption since, according to Aquinas's cosmology, they lack matter open to contrary forms.

The first temporal proposition, "what is possible not to be, at some time is not", is interpreted by Grieco as referring to their previous generation and their future corruption. Regarding a future corruption: "Things composed out of naturally contrary elements have a future time of corruption due to an internal and active principle of corruption, namely their very composition out of contrary material qualities"[92]. Regarding their previous generation, the composition of diverse principles must be the work of an agent. This is because "the internal composition demands that these bodies were also generated at some time (assuming that they were not created *ex nihilo* at a certain point in time with their essential principles intact)"[93].

The second temporal proposition, "If therefore all are possible beings, then nothing was in things at some time"[94], is argued by Grieco as not committing the composition fallacy or quantifier-shift fallacy. This is because the natural perpetuity of the species of possible things is frustrated in a world in which there are only possibles, "because the very forms of these lower things, which are as necessary for these beings to reproduce their kind as they are for them to exist at all, are only present therein owing to the agency of some necessary being or beings"[95].

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[91] J. GRIECO, *An Analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas's Third Way*, 255-256.

[92] J. GRIECO, *An Analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas's Third Way*, 322.

[93] J. GRIECO, *An Analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas's Third Way*, 409.

[94] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 2, a. 3: "Si igitur omnia sunt possibilia non esse, aliquando nihil fuit in rebus".

[95] J. GRIECO, *An Analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas's Third Way*, 380-381. See J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 306: "In the resolution of motion to extrinsic causes, natural becoming requires an *agens perpetuum* which through its circulation effects the perpetuity of

Thus, the first part of the Third Way does not refer to the actual generation of possible beings or argue that their individual non-existence at some time implies a collective non-existence at some time; rather, it argues to the existence of necessary beings by means of the hypothetical situation that all beings are possible. The hypothetical removal of necessary beings (a substance that lacks matter open to contrary forms: celestial bodies) implies the collective non-existence of possible beings (inferior, sublunary corruptible bodies). A universe without necessary beings means that the beings composed of the four elements could never have been generated since they cannot explain their forms. A world composed solely of possible beings ends in being a world in which nothing exists. In fact, what is possible constantly needs an adequate cause of their forms. In order to exercise this equivocal and conserving causality, "a being cannot possess the same kind of matter enjoyed by the possible. Since the common matter of possible beings is matter open to contrary forms, the only kind of being that can be such a cause is a being that does not possess such matter"[96].

The second part of the Third Way, which begins with the existence of necessary beings, argues to the existence of God as follows:

> Now every necessary being either has a cause of its necessity from another, or it does not. However, it is not possible to proceed to infinity in necessary beings that have a cause of their necessity, just as it is impossible in efficient causes, as has been proved. Therefore it is necessary to posit something that is necessary of itself, that does not have a cause of its necessity from another, but which is the cause of necessity for others, which all call God[97].

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this becoming: 'The alterations and corruptions in this world are reducible to the celestial body as first mover'". See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Compendium theologiae*, I, ch. 4 and *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 149.

[96] J. GRIECO, *An Analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas's Third Way*, 410. It is interesting to note how the second phase of I, q. 44, a. 2 refers to the *obliquum circulum* as a universal cause of the essential forms of corporeal bodies.

[97] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 2, a. 3: "Omne autem necessarium vel habet causam suae necessitatis aliunde, vel non habet. Non est autem possibile quod procedatur in infinitum in necessariis quae habent causam suae necessitatis, sicut nec in causis efficientibus, ut probatum Est. Ergo necesse est ponere aliquid quod sit per se necessarium, non habens causam necessitatis aliunde, sed quod est causa necessitatis aliis, quod omnes dicunt Deum".

Grieco argues that the identification of a being capable of causing the necessity of others with God is a fruitful one: "A cause of necessity is an infinitely powerful and active being that is a creative cause of its effects". At the same time, Grieco finds the argument for the existence of this *per se* necessary being unconvincing. I would counter, however, that this shortcoming can be overcome insofar as the second part of the Third Way makes explicit reference to the Second Way: "*sicut nec in causis efficientibus, ut probatum est*". This means that if the necessary being, whose existence is proved in the first part, gives evidence in some way of being caused, then the *per se* ordered series of efficient causes that is constituted, must arrive to a first uncaused efficient cause.

[1] First, the finite necessary *ens* is mobile and is moved: "The continuous and circular movement of the heavens stems not from an active, intrinsic principle but rather from their inclination to this movement and their passive principle of movement that is actualized by an external agent"[98]. Thus, the reasoning of the First Way would bring one to a first immobile mover in the second part of the Third Way.

[2] Second, their necessary form, which limits being to a particular degree, must be produced by an efficient cause. This can be concluded on the basis of the reasoning of the Fourth Way.

[3] Finally, the finite necessary beings in question are governed (ordered and moved to an end) by an intelligent being. This is the conclusion of the Fifth Way.

2.4. The Fourth Way and the *exitus* of creation

A first question regarding the Fourth Way, *ex gradibus*, concerns its starting point: Is it limited to transcendental perfections or does it includes pure perfections like *vivere* and *intelligere*. Without sidestepping the question, it is important to see that, according to the method of *resolutio secundum rationem*, a dialectical reduction of all these perfections leads to the perfection of *actus essendi*. "Animality", for

[98] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 307-308.

example, can be considered univocally as the generic formal perfection of material, sentient beings or dialectically as a degree of the perfection of *vivere*. Man, in this second sense, realizes in a more perfect way the ontological virtuality of the perfection of animal life. Life, in turn, is able to be reduced to a degree of being: something has life to the degree that it has being. Examples of transcendental perfections, on the other hand, are mentioned explicitly in the text of the Fourth Way.

A second difficulty in the interpretation of the Fourth Way concerns how exemplary causality and efficient causality relate to one another in the Fourth Way. For example, some argue that the first part concerns exemplary causality and the second part concerns efficient causality. One possible reason for this interpretation is that some hold that the notion of participation is subordinated to that of causality and is a notion proper to the doctrine of creation, which presupposes the demonstration of the existence of God. Our previous reflection on the third stage of *resolutio secundum rationem* and the *quia* demonstration of the real distinction pointed to an integration of the notions of causality, act-potency and participation[99]. In the interpretation of Cornelio Fabro, the Fourth Way is structured according to a twofold relation of participation which first relates *ens* to its limited act of being, and then relates the latter to subsistent Being. The best formulation of the Fourth Way, according to Fabro, is found in the prologue to Aquinas's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*:

> Everything that is according to participation is reduced to that which is by essence, as to the first and highest; […]. Therefore, since all things which are, participate in *esse* and are beings by participation, it is necessary that there be, at the summit of all things, something which is *esse* by its essence, i.e., that its essence

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[99] See A. CONTAT, "La *quarta via* di san Tommaso d'Aquino e le prove di Dio di sant'Anselmo di Aosta secondo le tre configurazioni dell'ente tomistico", in *Sant'Anselmo d'Aosta 'Doctor magnificus'. A 900 anni della morte*, C. Pandolfi and J. Villagrasa (eds.), IF Press, Rome 2011, 150: "The foundation of *ens* that has *esse* in a partial way on absolute Being moves by means of the ontological insufficiency of the former: limited *ens* is in act since it is; and it is in potency, since, being limited, it cannot have this act from itself; now, that which is in potency to a partial act cannot receive this act unless it participates in that which possesses it in an absolute way. In this *resolutio* of *ens* to Being, platonic participation, framed on the couplet of participated and participant, is fused with Aristotelian causality, centered on the couplet of act and potency".

> is its *esse*: and this is God, who is […] the most perfect cause of the whole of *esse*, from whom all things that are, participate in *esse*[100].

In Aquinas, structural composition, efficient causality and exemplar causality are integrated in the notion of participation. Participation denotes a real dependence in relation to the Participated, not only according to exemplar causality, but also according to efficient causality. In this interpretation, the fundamental syllogism of the Fourth Way can be formulated as follows[101]:

[m] The finite *ens* that we encounter in our experience is an *ens* that has *esse* in a limited way by participation [*per se primo modo*];
[M] now, that which is by participation is caused by that which is *per essentiam* [*per se quarto modo*];
[c] hence, the finite ens that we encounter in our experience is caused by that which is esse per essentiam, that all call "God" [*per se secundo modo*].

In Fabro's interpretation of the "principle of participation": "*ex hoc quod aliquid est ens per participationem sequitur quod sit causatum ab alio*"[102], being caused by another is a *per se* property of "*ens per participationem*". *Ens per participationem* is not *esse* in its fullness; since esse is present in it only in part and in a limited way, it directly implies a relation of dependence on *Esse per essentiam*.

In Twentieth-century Thomism, there have been varied interpretations of the Fourth Way. Alain Contat individuates three of them based on how *ens* is interpreted. Contat's chart from his article on the Fourth Way helps us situate Fabro's proposal[103].

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[100] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Lectura super Ioannem*, prol., n. 5: "Omne illud quod est secundum participationem, reducitur ad aliquid quod sit illud per suam essentiam, sicut ad primum et ad summum; […]. Cum ergo omnia quae sunt, participent esse, et sint per participationem entia, necesse est esse aliquid in cacumine omnium rerum, quod sit ipsum esse per suam essentiam, idest quod sua essentia sit suum esse: et hoc est Deus, qui est […] perfectissima causa totius esse, a quo omnia quae sunt, participant esse".

[101] See A. CONTAT, "La *quarta via* di san Tommaso d'Aquino …", 171.

[102] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 44 a. 1 ad 1.

[103] The chart is based on that of A. CONTAT, "La *quarta via* di san Tommaso d'Aquino", 168. See p. 166: "Dividing real *ens* into formal perfection and existential actua-

Figure	Classical	Transcendental	Fabrian
Analysis of *ens*	Existential act actuating a formal act	Absolute horizon limited by a formal content	Act of being limited by a potency of being
Point of departure	Existential *esse* insofar as it is not differentiated by itself	Transcendental *esse* insofar as it is the con-dition of possibility of *ens*	Intensive *esse* insofar as it is received in a participated manner
Major premise	The differentiated is caused by another	The condition is Ontologically anterior to the conditioned	That which is by participation is caused by that which is by essence
Central aspect	Nexus of efficient causality between differentiated *esse* and *Esse per se*	Nexus of Transcendental measure between limited *ens* and unlimited *Esse*	Nexus of ontological participation between *ens per participationem* and *Esse per essentiam*

The Fourth Way, interpreted as a way of participation, is found midway between the proof of the real distinction and the explanation of creation. Creation is explained as a production of being by God "through the mediation of some formal cause"[104]. This formal cause conforms to the divine exemplar, resulting in a twofold exemplarity: imitation of the divine nature and formal adequation to the divine idea[105]. The efficient and exemplary causal lines are complemented by

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tion, the interpretation of Classical Thomism subordinated participation to causality and eliminated measure; dialecticizing thought *ens* into objective content and anticipated horizon, the second interpretation subordinated participation and causality – reduced basically to coherence – to transcendental measure; the third interpretation, however, assumes measure, understood in a realistic sense, and causality, grasped in an integral sense (exemplar and efficient), within participation, which becomes the key to the entire argumentative structure".

[104] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De Veritate*, q. 27, a. 1 ad 3: "Esse naturale per creationem Deus facit in nobis nulla causa agente mediante, sed tamen mediante aliqua causa formali: forma enim naturalis principium est esse naturalis".

[105] G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*, CUA Press, Washington DC 2008, 222: "Through the exemplarism of the divine nature, then, the finite being receives its total entity *as* a being, both its essence and its *esse*; for in imitating that exemplar, the finite being imitates the absolute perfection that is being itself (*ipsum esse*). By contrast, through the exemplarism of the divine ideas, the finite being receives only its essence; for in imitating *that* exemplar, the finite being imitates but one limited mode of being (*esse*). Contrary to Geiger's position, then, the distinction between absolute perfection and mode of being *is* an adequate real distinction in creatures. Indeed, this distinction forms the foundation of the very distinction between essence and *esse* in any being".

a third causal line that founds a new aspect of participation – the dynamic assimilation of the creature to the Creator:

> Therefore, the *exitus a principio* of the created substance carries with it the ontological demand of the *reditus in finem*: the donation of being to *ens* is fulfilled in the return of the donee to the donor by means of the fecundity of the gift, which impels the created supposit toward its own perfectioning. Thus, if the creature refers to God according to a nexus of provenience, as an *ens per participationem* to Being *per essentiam*, then the same creature will be ordered to God as a good *per participationem* to the Goodness *per essentiam* according to a nexus of finality[106].

And this – the expansion of finite being in *operari* according to the natural inclination of being to its perfection – is the theme of the Fifth Way.

2.5. The Fifth Way and the *reditus* of creation

In the Fifth Way, *ex gubernatione rerum*, Aquinas inquires about the governance of natural beings to their end, namely, the effective realization of the divine plan of order of natural things to their end. Earlier, I argued that all finite beings are ordered to their second perfection, which is achieved through their operation[107]. The movement to the end follows from the inclination of their respective natures, which limit the emergent act of being to a particular degree. Jan Aertsen identifies various factors in this relation between nature and end:

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[106] A. CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo.* Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", 21.

[107] See A. CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo.* Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", 29. Created and conserved by God, the *suppositum* subsists therefore in its *esse*, and is specified by its *essentia*. For Saint Thomas, this *exitus* implies necessarily a *reditus*, which is concretized as "*ordo effectus ad aliquid alterum*", namely, as ordination to the good. Now, the perfect good of a thing is found in its ultimate end, which is achievable by means of the highest operation of which this thing is capable. […] Leaving the Creator by means of the gift of its act of being measured by its correlative essence, the created substance is therefore ordered to an ulterior perfection which it achieves by operating".

[1] A *nature* proportionate to the end: in the nature as principle, there is a certain beginning of the end (*inchoatio finis*)[108].

[2] An *inclination* which is a natural appetite for that end: Underlying this appetite "is an anticipatory unity of the nature in which it is rooted and of the end towards which it tends. The foundation of the inclination towards the good is an affinity, a 'connaturality' whereby the good desired pre-exists in the appetite, as the act in the potency"[109].

[3] The *motus* towards the end that follows from the inclination: the appetite aims at completion of the union; the movement towards the appetible is desire that arises from the nature of that which tends, from an intrinsic principle.

The Fifth Way argues that the finalized operation of natural beings demands an intelligent principle, for the work of nature (*opus naturae*) is a work of an intelligence (*opus intelligentiae*). Aquinas writes in Book III of the *Summa contra Gentiles*: "Natural bodies receive an inclination to their natural ends from their natural movers, whence they derive their forms, powers and movements. Wherefore it is also clear that every work of nature is the work of an intelligent substance"[110]. The influence of the divine intellect on natural things is seen first of all in the measuring of the nature by divine art: "Natural things are measured by the divine intellect"[111]. To understand the passage from divine art to divine providence and governance, it is good to distinguish between the different "types" of divine knowledge in relation to creatures[112]:

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[108] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *De veritate*, q. 14, a. 2.

[109] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 343.

[110] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 24: "Corpora naturalia consequuntur inclinationem in fines naturales ex moventibus naturalibus, ex quibus sortiuntur suas formas et virtutes et motus. Unde etiam patet quod quodlibet opus naturae est opus substantiae intelligentis".

[111] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De veritate,* q. 1, a. 2: "Res naturales, […] sunt mensuratae ab intellectu divino".

[112] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 93, a. 1: "Unde sicut ratio divinae sapientiae inquantum per eam cuncta sunt creata, rationem habet artis vel exemplaris vel ideae; ita ratio divinae sapientiae moventis omnia ad debitum finem, obtinet rationem legis. Et secundum hoc, lex aeterna nihil aliud est quam ratio divinae sapientiae, secundum quod est directiva omnium actuum et motionum". *Ibid.*, III, ch. 140: "Divina providentia non solum disponit rerum ordinem, sed etiam movet omnia ad ordinis ab eo dispositi executionem".

- *Ars*: ratio that measures what is created;
- *Dispositio*: ratio regarding the initial ordering of things;
- *Providentia*: ratio regarding the ordering of things to their end;
- *Lex aeterna*: ratio that commands things to act in accord wittheir natures and their end.

Gubernatio, mentioned in the title of the Fifth Way, is the effective execution of the *ratio* of providence through secondary causes. These distinctions help us grasp the fact that the principles of the Fifth Way (the need for an ordering *ratio*) presuppose the exemplary causality proper to the Fourth Way (the need for a *ratio* that measures the perfection of the creature). The measuring of the nature of the creature by divine art results in the *ordo* of that creature to its proper operation and end. According to Thomas, the operation of nature, which is the end of the creature, presupposes an intellect that predetermines the end[113]. Thus, "*agere* necessarily requires the predetermination of the *agendum*"[114]. Nature, then, is the *ratio* of the divine art, which is implanted in things, and moves them to the determined end[115]. Formalized in a syllogism, the premises and conclusion of the Fifth Way are as follows:

[m] The irrational *ens* that acts for an end is an *ens* that is incapable of predetermining *intellectualiter* its end;
[M] now, that which is incapable of predetermining *intellectualiter* its end, is ordered and moved to that end by a first intelligence [*per se quarto modo*];

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[113] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 105, a. 5: "Semper enim imperfectum est propter perfectius, sicut igitur materia est propter formam, ita forma, quae est actus primus, est propter suam operationem, quae est actus secundus; et sic operatio est finis rei creatae".

[114] A. CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo.* Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", 20.

[115] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In II Phys*., lect. 14, n. 268: "Unde patet quod natura nihil est aliud quam ratio cuiusdam artis, scilicet divinae, indita rebus, qua ipsae res moventur ad finem determinatum". "The natural order is a providential order": "Nature belongs to the class of causes that work for an end. This is of importance for the question of providence. For what lacks knowledge of the end does not tend towards the end unless it be directed by a being that knows, as the arrow by the archer. Thus if nature acts for an end, it must be ordained by some intelligent being. This is the work of providence" (*In II Phys.*, lect. 12, n. 250).

[c] hence, the irrational *ens* that acts for an end is ordered and moved to that end by a first intelligence [*per se secundo modo*].

The order of the nature to the end is from another (*ab alio*). As Aertsen explains: "The inclination of nature to an end must be aroused by a good that is different from and outside it. For the operation is the completion of the thing, because in this act it relates itself to something other. The last end to which a thing is directed is the most desired […], for the ultimate is the first in the order of the appetible"[116]. The diversity of ends to which things are ordered and gathered in the directedness to divine goodness as final end, is reduced to a unity. The ultimate end of everything is the first principle of things, in which we find every perfection of being. The ultimate end to which all the creaturely moves is to be like God, to be assimilated to God: everything tends towards God *per viam assimilationis*[117]. The creaturely tends to the divine likeness according to the diversity of operations through its operation[118]. The assimilation to the divine is twofold:

[1] Every being tends in its operation towards the preservation of its being: this assimilation to God can be directly correlated to the cosmological circulation. Nature is directed to the permanence of the species and the operation of nature tends to the likeness of the divine perpetuity[119].
[2] Every being tends through its operation towards the communication of its form, towards the diffusion of its goodness as the cause of another. In causal activity, in the giving of being, the thing completes itself and is assimilated to God. "By communicating to other things the perfection that they have received, they contribute to the execution of God's providential order and realize their likeness to the divine perfection"[120]. Their operation is a co-operation: "There is nothing

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[116] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 356. See also *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 2 and ad 10; *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 22, a. 1.
[117] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 358.
[118] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, chs. 19-22.
[119] See J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 359.
[120] See J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 359.

> more divine in things than to become a co-operator with God"[121].

In the assimilation of natural things to God through perpetuity and causality, the circular movement remains imperfect. This is because these things tend towards God only implicitly, for in their natural ends they do not discern the attraction of the ultimate End. Only in rational and intellectual creatures is the circulation perfect. These creatures alone are able to attain through their activity to God himself; they are "capable of God" and tend towards God *per viam cognitionis*[122]. Rational creatures are subject to divine providence, not only insofar as they are governed by it, but also since they are able to know something of the nature of providence and become capable of providence and government with respect to others[123].

Conclusion

By evidencing the correspondence or symmetry between the stages of *resolutio secundum rationem* and the Five Ways, a first conclusion can be made about the relationship between metaphysics and philosophical theology. According to Aquinas, they are the same speculative science and have the same *subiectum*. The same method, that of *resolutio*, is used to reach the ultimate causes of the *subiectum*: the analysis to intrinsic causes of *ens mobile* and *ens qua ens* are completed by the reduction to extrinsic causes according to the method of *resolutio secundum rem*.

Second, the Five Ways work with one another in successive phases of *resolutio* and, seen together, have an important function within the greater structure of the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*. This function is most evident in question 44, which in article 2 mentions the three stages of *resolutio* that lead to the real distinc-

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[121] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 21: "Unde Dionysius dicit, III cap. *Caelestis hierarchiae*, quod omnium divinius est Dei cooperatorem fieri".

[122] See J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 360.

[123] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 113: "Creatura rationalis sic providentiae divinae subiacet quod non solum ea gubernatur, sed etiam rationem providentiae utcumque cognoscere potest: unde sibi competit etiam aliis providentiam et gubernationem exhibere". For an in-depth study of this point, see J. RHIZA, *Perfecting Human Actions: St. Thomas Aquinas on Human Participation in Eternal Law,* CUA Press, Washington DC 2009.

tion of *essentia* and *esse* and to the doctrine of creation, and which in article 4 demonstrates that God is the ultimate final cause of all things. Since the Five Ways work together, each way has a purpose and a function within the greater project of philosophical theology and Sacred Theology. For example, if one were to argue against the metaphysical principles of the First Way, then serious difficulties arise when God is considered as the cause of the action of the creature. This unfortunately happens in Suarez's theory: God's causal action is limited to a general placing of the possible essence in existence, sustaining the realized essence in existence and concurring with the specifying operation of this existing essence. God, in Suarez's proposal, does not move the rational creature to its end, but rather concourses with the rational creature, who is in charge of specifying the effect.

A third conclusion holds that although they are autonomous in their argument, the Five Ways do, in fact, build on one another. This is seen in the progression from efficient causality (first three ways) to exemplar-efficient causality as participation (Fourth Way) and from these to the efficient-exemplary-final causality of the Fifth Way. On the one hand, the three causalities are a vestige of the Trinity in creation[124]. On the other, the second half of the *prima pars* follows the outline provided by the structure of question 44: efficient causality and the production of creatures (q. 45-46), exemplary causality and the distinction of creatures (q. 47-102), and final causality and the preservation (*conservatio in bono*) and governance (*motio ad bonum*) of creatures (q. 103-115). Thus the *reditus* of all creatures to God falls under the scope of the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, since it is an essential aspect of the circular causality of creation[125]. The return of man to God by way of Christ is the theme of the rest of the *Summa*.

Summary: Aquinas's Five Ways can be structured in accordance with the metaphysical method of *resolutio*. The real distinction between subject and its accidents is complemented by the reduction of accidental movement to the first immobile mover (First Way). The distinction between prime matter and substantial form requires two levels of causality reflected in the Third Way and in its reduction of possible beings subject to generation and corruption,

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[124] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 47, a. 7.

[125] See R. TE VELDE, *Aquinas on God. The 'Divine Science' of the Summa theologiae*, 128.

to some necessary being in need of an ulterior reduction. The real composition of essence and *actus essendi* is fundamental to the Fourth Way, interpreted as a way of participation. A fourth stage in *resolutio* considers the ordered operation of finite beings and this consideration is complemented by the Fifth Way.

Le cinque vie di san Tommaso d'Aquino possono essere strutturate secondo il metodo metafisico della *resolutio*. La distinzione reale fra il soggetto e i suoi accidenti viene completata dalla riduzione del movimento accidentale al primo motore immobile (Prima via). La distinzione fra la materia prima e la forma sostanziale richiede due livelli di causalità, che sono presenti nella Terza Via con la sua riduzione degli enti possibili, soggetti alla generazione e alla corruzione, a qualche ente necessario che ha bisogno di una riduzione ulteriore. La composizione reale dell'essenza e dell'*actus essendi* è fondamentale alla Quarta Via, interpretata come una via di partecipazione. La quarta tappa della *resolutio* considera l'operazione ordinata degli enti finiti; e questa considerazione si ritrova nella Quinta Via.

Key words: *resolutio*, Thomas Aquinas, Five Ways, participation, *gubernatio*

Parole chiave: *resolutio*, Tommaso d'Aquino, le cinque vie, partecipazione, *gubernatio*